

Statement on House Action on the Republican Budget Proposal *April 14, 1999*

The budget passed by House Republicans falls short of what the American people need for meeting the challenges of the 21st century. It fails to lock away the surplus to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, and it fails to meet many of America's other critical needs for the future. The fiscal discipline of the past 6 years has given us a historic opportunity to meet our

Nation's most serious long-term challenges. I will continue to work with the Congress to use the surplus to pay down our national debt, to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, to encourage our people to save for the future, and to meet our defense, education, and other long-term needs.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspaper Editors in San Francisco, California *April 15, 1999*

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Seaton, distinguished officers, and members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the crisis in Kosovo, why we're there, what our objectives are, how this fits in with our larger vision of the future.

Since I'm here I can't help noting that one of the truly striking aspects of this moment is the stark contrast it illuminates between a free society with a free press, and a closed society where the press is used to manipulate people by suppressing or distorting the truth.

In Belgrade today, independent journalists are being persecuted. This week, one brave editor was murdered in cold blood. Meanwhile, the Government-run press has constructed an alternative reality for the Serbian people in which the atrocities their soldiers are committing in Kosovo simply don't exist. Under those conditions, decent people can remain in denial, supporting policies that lead them to political and economic ruin.

Thank goodness our press and free press throughout the world have tried to get at and get out the truth, to ensure that words like refugees, displacement, ethnic cleansing don't become stale and lifeless but remain causes for action.

The tragedy in Kosovo is the result of a meticulously planned and long-premeditated attack on an entire people simply on the basis of their ethnicity and religion, an attack grounded in a

philosophy that teaches people to dearly love a piece of land while utterly dismissing the humanity of those who occupy it.

That is what Mr. Milosevic has been doing ever since Yugoslavia started breaking up in 1989. For a decade, he has been trying to build a Greater Serbia by using military force to rearrange the ethnic character of the nations which emerged from Yugoslavia. That is what he did for years in Croatia and, horribly, in Bosnia—what he is doing in Kosovo now.

Last year he drove hundreds of thousands of people from their homes into the frigid mountains and let them back only after NATO threatened to use force. He is now determined to crush all resistance to his rule even if it means turning Kosovo into a lifeless wasteland.

As these difficult days proceed, it is important to remember that we have no quarrel with the Serbian people. They were our allies in World War II; they have often been our allies. In a sense, they are victims of this tragedy, too. And we must understand the anguish of Serbian-Americans who, like Albanian-Americans, are worried about their loved ones back home. Americans should not blame Serbs or look down on Serbian-Americans because we disagree with the Milosevic government. We must not let his ethnic cleansing provoke us to ethnic bias.

We and our 18 NATO Allies are in Kosovo today because we want to stop the slaughter and the ethnic cleansing; because we want to build a stable, united, prosperous Europe that